

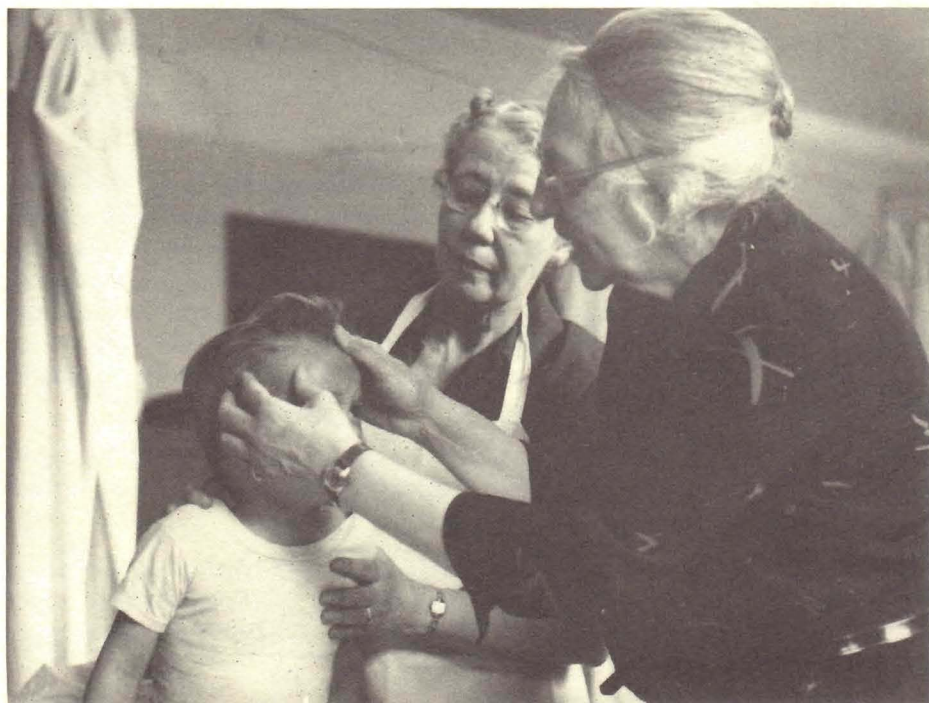
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AN EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN OF HER TIME



Examining a child at the Well Baby Clinic in Rutland where Dr. Perkins volunteered her time from the 1940s to the late 1950s.

Emelie Munson Perkins, M.D.
1890-1986

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Louise Burditt was born in Rutland, attended Lincoln Elementary School (1-6), Meldon Junior High School (7-8) and Rutland High School, graduating in 1944. She received a B.A. degree from Smith College in 1949. After attending the Rochester Institute of Technology for the study of photographic technology, she returned to Smith as the official college photographer for the Public Relations Department and remained there until 1954, when she moved to New York City. In New York she worked first for the Vermont Development Commission and then for the National Council of Women of the United States.

In 1963 she entered the employment of the Lenox School, a private school (K-12) in New York City, as the Director of Admissions. She also started a photography club for students. The club grew, expanded and gave her the opportunity to teach photography (her first love) full time.

In 1978 Mary Lou received a Master of Arts (media) degree from the New School for Social Research. During summer vacations in Vermont she exhibited her photographs at the Chaffee Art Gallery, the Southern Vermont Art Center and the Stratton Arts Festival. In 1981 she became a member of the Southern Vermont Branch of the National League of American Pen Women. In 1987 she received a grant from the Lenox School Bacon-Dee Fund, enabling her to travel abroad with "Photo Communication in England and Scotland", a program of Michigan State University School of Journalism.

This year, after teaching for twenty-eight years at the Lenox School, Miss Burditt has retired to her home in Manchester Center, Vermont. She is looking forward to the continuing pleasure of photography.

Dr. Emelie Perkins was Mary Louise Burditt's aunt. She and her aunt had a close, companionable relationship. It has been a pleasure for the author to relive the life of her aunt by exploring the wealth of documents and letters preserved in the doctor's attic or given to Mary Lou by friends.

Dr. Perkins had a wide circle of friends, which means that names abound in her life story. They will lack meaning to some but their omission would dilute the flavor of the rich, full life lived to a great age by this remarkable woman.



FOR EMELIE

A deep thirst for Knowledge
Had prompted Smith College
With her family lip-pursing
She then studied nursing,
But garnered no wealth
In the field of public health.
She then “took a flyer”
In something much higher,
So in 3 years we see
She’s a full-fledged M.D.
For twenty-five years
With laughter and tears,
She practiced pediatrics
(And a few other hat tricks)!
’Til a long-hidden “yen”
Made her take up the pen,
Not to write but to draw
The everyday thing that she saw.
She leaves us aghast
At talents so vast!
So now that she’s turned 92
What other remarkable things will she do?

Betsy Wild
15 May 1982



The Perkins sisters: Louise (left), Henrietta, and Emelie

An Extraordinary Woman of Her Time

By Mary Lou Burditt

Before Emelie Perkins entered medical school her life in Rutland was full. She was the youngest of the three daughters of Mary Cornelia (Childs) and Clarence Oakley Perkins. When Emelie was born, May 16, 1890, her sister Louise was eight and Henrietta three. Emelie was named for her mother's sister, Emeline Childs McGraw. The family lived at 45 North Main Street in Rutland where Emelie seemed to be a spirited child, as evidenced by a letter of admonition from her temporarily absent mother. It read, "Emelie, please do try to behave." In any event, her youth was filled with family activities, reading (she loved fairy tales and poetry), friends, buggy rides, card playing, and long walks in the country. She later recalled that there was one delightful place to eat, down on the Creek Road, with one's appetite well-whetted by the long walk. She was taught privately, but did attend some classes in the large white house at 44 North Main Street and graduated from Rutland High School in 1906. Many activities centered around the church and regular attendance was taken for granted. She was a member of the Rutland Congregational Church and her Sunday School class of girls was also her Camp Fire group, a forerunner of the Girl Scouts. In retrospect, she felt it was "a fine organization . . . excellence in any of the different fields of endeavor brought the prized award of a bead for one's chain—the field signified by the color."

Early family picnics at White Rocks in Wallingford were high-lighted by the recitations of various family members standing on the rocks. Emelie may have perfected "Rufflecumtuffie" there. She remembered such a poem well enough to repeat the 81 lines when she was 95 years old. So far as any harbinger of the future was concerned, she later remembered a nurse who cared for her after a childhood appendectomy.

"I was the first or second person in Rutland to have my appendix out. . . . It was quite an event. My father had no confidence in the hospital and wouldn't let me go there, so the operation was performed on a table in the guest room of our home."

But, overall, she felt "Life was more quiet and peaceful. . . . We never thought about war, and except for countries I visited on my trips abroad, we knew and heard little about the outside world. . . . I was not aware of other countries or their problems."



As Emelie was growing up, the country was growing up, too. Congress created the Territory of Oklahoma and the territories of Washington, Montana and the Dakotas were ready to become states. Population since the last census had increased by 25% to 63 million. Economic and social changes of the Industrial Revolution brought communication and illumination, too. The telephone (1876) and electric lights (1879) were gaining popularity but, more importantly, people were communicating and becoming aware of social conditions hitherto unknown.

Women were leaving their homes in order to take part in civic activities of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs or the Women's Suffrage Movement. They were responding to the injustice of child labor and poverty as pictured and written about in New York City by Jacob Riis and Lewis W. Hine. In 1889, in Chicago, Jane Addams, a thirty-year old social worker, had opened Hull-House to needy children, their parents, and the homeless with the hope of establishing a kindergarten. In 1890, according to Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, in *Opening the Medical Profession to Women*,

1,302 women were enrolled in 64 of the nation's 152 medical schools. But it was the admission of women to prestigious Johns Hopkins which appeared to signal victory in the battle of women to gain equal access to medical training. . . . In 1886, a group of women had launched a campaign to endow Johns Hopkins' long-delayed Medical School on the condition that women be admitted on the same basis as men. An endowment of \$500,000 was too much for the financially beleaguered university to refuse and in 1893 three of the twenty-one entering students were women. [But] by 1910, as women doctors achieved some success in the overcrowded field of medicine, medical schools established a quota system limiting the number of 'women's places' nationally to five percent.



In 1906 the bright, ambitious, 16-year-old Miss Perkins drove onto the Smith campus in Northampton, Massachusetts, at the wheel of an early model Ford automobile. It was one of two cars on campus. Driving to Smith from Rutland was a two-day trip then, requiring a stay overnight in Bellows Falls.

Emelie was enrolled in the liberal arts course at Smith and in 1907, at the end of her freshman year, took her first trip abroad with her family—mother, father, and two sisters. They sailed 23 April from Hoboken (New Jersey) to Gibraltar and landed 3 May.

Her diary entries reflect both her powers of observation and the preciseness with which she used her pen either to record her experiences or, later, to draw. On 3 May she wrote:

We landed . . . about eleven o'clock, and went up by the market to the Grand Hotel. On the right-hand side the market is an ordinary English one, but on the left is where the Moors bring their poultry, etc., across from Africa. They have to bring their fowls undressed. The streets are very narrow and the roads are all solid rock. The city is built on the rock almost entirely. The houses are whitewashed and most have little balconies. There are many Moors there. . . . They wear turbans, cape-like cloaks and sandals. [Across the bay] In Algeciras the houses are very like those in Gibraltar, but it is Spanish. The Alameda or garden is very beautiful. It is composed of several gardens paid for by the wealthy citizens, in which the people may walk. As in Gibraltar, donkeys are used very much for carrying and the little animals are heavily loaded. The town has 16,000 inhabitants.

The trip in Spain continued to Granada, Malaga, Seville, Cordoba and Ronda. On Emelie's 17th birthday she sailed to Genoa, Italy, and visited Naples, Nice (Monte Carlo) and Como. At Naples the family left the boat to go ashore at 2:00 p.m., drove around sightseeing all day, had a leisurely dinner . . . "and then we drove to the wharf.

It was fun driving through the narrow streets all lighted up. We thought the tender would run out at ten, but it made the last trip at seven and we had to hire a boatman to row us out. We had a great time discussing whether we should pay before or after we reached the boat. It was quite thrilling rowing on the Mediterranean in the moonlight. Naples is a very pretty place but not especially prepossessing from the harbor. Vesuvius was smoking a little as we left. St. Elmo stands out prominently on a high hill."

Then to Switzerland on a train and through the Simplon Tunnel ("the longest in the world—took 27 minutes—not as unpleasant as I had expected because we had an electric engine").

On 2 June she took a rack and pinion train to Zermatt to see the Matterhorn and continued to Montreux, Interlaken, and Grindelwald where she recorded, "I talked German to the Guide and could understand quite well."

Lucerne, Rigi, and Munich, Bavaria. In New Pinaksthek Emelie visited an art gallery containing modern paintings which she said, "I enjoyed very much, although I did not expect to." Nurenberg, Mainz, Heidelberg, Cologne and Amsterdam followed, with continued thoughtful descriptions of pictures in art galleries along the way.

In September Emelie returned to Smith College. In October of her senior year (1909–1910) her father died. Since the death of Mr. Keyes in 1893 he had been the senior member of the firm of E. D. Keyes & Co., wholesale grocers. Emelie attended the funeral in Rutland and wrote, "everyone lovely, but everything seems so different and empty".

After graduation Emelie and her mother visited some cousins in New York City and then went home to Rutland. Later when interviewed about horse and buggy doctoring days, Emelie said, "I returned home to care for my mother. At that time unmarried women were expected to be a 'sunshine in the home'—doing errands, odd jobs, and chauffeuring family members around town. They were all things, of course, that anyone could have done. Finally, I got sick of it."

At that time, Dr. Charles S. Caverly was the family physician and friend, having begun his practice in Rutland in 1883. In addition to his private practice, he was interested and active in public health, especially infantile paralysis and tuberculosis. (He helped establish the Pittsford Sanatorium.) Emelie's diary reads, "Dr. Caverly took me for a little ride." He may well have been influential in guiding her interest in the study of medicine.

Emelie read a great deal and she kept a book about nursing under her pillow to read at night. She still enjoyed her Camp Fire girls but knew that The Reverend Arthur Bradford was supportive of her ambition to become a nurse. For a brief period she worked at the Rutland Library and wrote 7 November 1910, "To library for the first time. Miss Cheney and Miss Premo sweet. Picked up children's room—fascinating books. Opened and stamped new books." Later, before her next trip to Europe, Emelie was given a travel diary inscribed with love from Mildred E. Premo, Minnie C. Gorton, Lucy D. Cheney.



In the spring of 1911 Emelie traveled (mostly by train) to visit friends and neighbors in Marble, Colorado, stopping en route in Chicago, just long enough to visit Jane Addams' Hull-House and the Mary Crane Nursery. Emelie's copy of *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, newly published in 1911, became well-worn and quite likely appealed to her growing interest in social work and nursing. Her visit in Marble included frequent horseback riding which was rugged enough to leave her lame for several days. She arrived home in Rutland in time to be a bridesmaid at her sister Henrietta's wedding to Wilbert Burditt on 21 June 1911. She then departed that fall for several months in Germany during the winter of 1911-1912.

Emelie, Louise and their mother arrived in Berlin on 14 November. They looked around at other *pensions* but deciding they liked their own best, arranged for tutors. Fräulein Busche would give them German lessons, they would attend an art school for lectures and on 23 November Emelie noted in her diary, "In the afternoon I took my first drawing lesson. Several girls came up and spoke to me in English, though only one was really English. It was very interesting."

It was a busy life. She experienced the "underground" [subway] for the first time, took trips to the surrounding countryside, including Potsdam, Oberhof and Trestow to see the great telescope and look at the moon. She visited art galleries and museums and attended the theater frequently. The opera was a favorite pastime: "Rigoletto", "Der Rosenkavalier", "Madama Butterfly", "Faust", "Mignon", "Tannhäuser", "Lohengrin" and others. She also attended church regularly. Emelie noted the progress of her skill in learning German by her ability to understand the sermons in church, the action of plays in theaters and the sense of the operas. She welcomed every opportunity to speak German. "Louise and I spent the morning going to police offices and newspaper places about her silver necklace which she lost. Fine practice in German", or "Gave Fräulein Busche her first bridge lesson. Used German entirely. It was certainly funny."

While she was in Berlin, Emelie . . .

. . . went up with Louise to see her doctor — talked quite a little with him. And at Christmas time, Fräulein Busche took us all to a school in Woobit. Went all over the building — saw her room and some others. The entertainment was dear — the children sang and recited — and had presents. There was a big tree at the head of a long table piled with shoes, cakes, caps, yarn, dolls, etc. They were all girls. . . . The director showed us around. It was all very interesting.

Toward the end of February, her diary notes, "I took my last art lesson — The Professor said my man was good!!!"

On 2 March they traveled to Dresden — "spent the morning in an art gallery — wonderful pictures — enjoyed the Italian School especially." On 4 March in Meissen "saw stages of porcelain manufacturing, an art gallery, and an opera. [Also] went to visit Miss Lefte at the sanitorium on Weisser Hirsch, a summer resort."

Then to Nurenberg, "carsick", and to Munich where, among other things, "I visited a private kindergarten. The dearest children in the dearest little bright colored aprons. The teacher was very nice and showed us everything." The diary stops as the travelers start for Innsbruck. In 1912-1913 Emelie studied at the Art Students' League in New York.



New York City, 1916, in nurse's training

Emelie later reminisced, "In 1916 I left home and my Camp Fire Girls to realize my life-long ambition — nurse's training. That was not a small decision. At that time, nurse's training consisted of long hours, hard work, and very strict discipline. At the Presbyterian Hospital Training School for Nurses in New York City, college graduates, though accepted, were given to understand that they were not really desirable because they were to apt to want to change things!" But, on 2 July 1917 she wrote home:

I am having a quiet night — my first quiet one in five weeks. I think it is really the first time that I haven't had someone awfully sick. It has been lots of fun tonight — one man had a treatment at nine o'clock and has slept like a top since. Another one goes off like a giant firecracker — he had an operation on his foot and wakes himself up moving and gives an awful snort, but he is asleep all right now. . . . It is going to be daylight in a few minutes — the sunrises are so pretty. I love these early mornings — especially when my family is quiet enough so I can enjoy them. We have a lot of nice boys now — hernia cases — who want to join the army and can't do it until they have had the operation. I have the sweetest youngster now — thirteen years old — He has tuberculosis of the hip, and is just beginning to walk. He does just as I tell him and is so bright and alert. He has a little book of Shakespeare and he says he likes the stories a lot.

Emelie received her R.N. in 1919. Later she wrote: "Upon graduation I obtained a job as Public Health Nurse in Arlington, New York [near Poughkeepsie (1919–1921)]. An eating house for college students allowed me to eat there, although, obviously, there were reservations — a nurse's social standing then was not very high! Luckily, times have changed." At the time, she reported to the Smith College Alumnae Quarterly: "I have been Public Health Nurse of Poughkeepsie Township since September, supervising fourteen rural schools, any number of babies, and a dear little new community house. I wish more college girls realized the joy of being a nurse." In 1921 Emelie went to Burlington, Vermont, as supervising nurse of the Burlington Visiting Nurse Association.

At the end of 1923 and the beginning of 1924, Emelie traveled to South America with Mr. and Mrs. Liberty Hyde Bailey and their daughter, Ethel, who was a Smith College friend. They visited Rio de Janeiro, went to Buenos Aires, and from there over the Andes on a train to Santiago and Valparaíso (Chile). She wrote from Valparaíso: "The *Saturday Evening Post* is here. I have found it almost everywhere. . . . I have bought a story about Valparaíso in Spanish, too, and I am struggling with that now. I have also bought Elliott's *Chile, Today and Tomorrow* which I found in a British bookstore here. *Brazil* was so good." She took a walk and noted:

I passed a big German hospital with lovely grounds, and then the hill reared right up again, and I climbed up, too — up a narrow cobbled street between poor little one story houses. I had to scramble to keep out of the way of the burros and pack horses, too. I climbed almost to the end of the street, and *such* a view! It was glorious — At first, as I looked back, I caught glimpses of the sea way below. Looking down the street was like looking down a tube, and the donkeys and the Indians in the road made it a real picture. From high up I had a broad view of the crescent shaped harbor and the hills and the sea and all the little fat, black barges, then, further out, the big ships. The sea was so blue — it was lovely. I tried to tell an Indian woman nearby that it was a 'bella vista' — and she answered with a flood of Spanish. Then I took a snapshot of an adorable little girl, and a boy came running after me and stood up his charge, a tiny little



Emelie Perkins in South America (top right) on horseback. Lower picture: (upper left) with Ethel Bailey, Smith College classmate (seated) with father, Liberty Hyde Bailey, co-founder of Cornell University College of Agriculture



thing, for me to take. [Later, she wrote from Mendoza] I will be sorry to leave Spanish Speaking America. I did not realize that Mr. Savage had given me such a good start with his lessons in Burlington. . . . We leave Valparaiso early day after tomorrow and go to Los Andes, where we spend the night. The next day it is a twelve hour trip over the Andes to Mendoza [Argentina], where we plan to stop a day or two.

The next letter was sent about a month later (28 February 1924) from Viçosa, Brazil (85 miles S.E. of Belo Horizonte):

Dear Mother, This is the purest Brazilian place yet I think. We are visiting the Rolfs and we came to climb Mount Arrapouqa. Mr. Rolfs is establishing an agricultural school here, under the auspices of the Brazilian government. Mr. Bailey knew Mr. Rolfs when he was connected with a college in Florida. We left Petropolis [by train] at eight o'clock in the morning, and rode until nine at night. The country is mountainous or hilly all the way and the vegetation is lovely. . . . Viçosa is an old little town of about five thousand. The Rolfs live a little outside the town in a . . . house which they have just built. Miss Clarissa Rolfs, the daughter is about twenty-five. They seem to like it but I should think it would be lonely—no social intercourse, and very few books. Just a few American magazines which they subscribe for. . . . Tomorrow we all, except Mrs. Rolfs, start on our mountain trip at six in the morning. We go a few miles in a Ford—then on muleback . . . Mr. Rolfs has a beautiful collection of bugs and butterflies. We are going to take his butterfly net tomorrow. We will stay at a private house at Arrapouqa with Brazilians—quite an experience. We sail three weeks from Saturday. I hope I won't be sick because I want to read my book on Brazil again.



Emelie entered the University of Vermont Medical School in 1925 and wrote to the Smith College Alumnae Quarterly, "This being a doctor is a good deal more of a trick than I realized. There are seven other women medics in the college, but none in my class. I come home—seventy-five miles—every Saturday afternoon and go back Sunday. Mother is alone and counts on it and I enjoy it."

Emelie received her medical degree in 1929, one of the first women to receive a medical degree from U.V.M. That summer she drove through England with her mother and her nephew, Franklin Burditt. Upon her return she interned at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Memorial Hospital (1929-1930), and attended the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine (1930-1931), which credited her with "1003 hours of study, practice, and investigation in pediatric studies." She was certified by both the National Board of Medical Examiners and the State of Vermont so that she could practice medicine.

By the time Emelie was ready to practice medicine in Rutland she was 41 years old. It was 1931 and Emelie had just opened an office in the Gryphon Building at the corner of West Street and Merchants Row for the purpose of practicing medicine. Her 1927 Buick was nicknamed "puddle-jumper" for its habit of leaping forward only to stall. Its redeeming feature was a rumble-seat. Her waiting room was inviting to children with Raggedy Ann, a child-sized wicker rocking chair, and a picture of a boy walking into the woods, dropping bread crumbs behind him so he could retrace his steps. Her patients and friends always found her easy to talk with. Her self-directed

EMELIE M. PERKINS.

A.B., R.N.

Pre-medical, Smith College
Rutland, Vermont

Alpha Gamma Sigma; Rutland
High School; Ariel Board
(M-3).

Emelie comes to us from the realm of public health. Having won high distinction in this field, together with a wide experience and professional attitude, which most of us have yet to cultivate, she decided to work out her destiny in medicine.

She, too, appears to have preserved those womanly qualities which are prone to be transformed by medical associations—but we see little of Emelie outside of the white walls of learning.

We must not slight the credit due her for the bravery and valor with which she takes the "hard knocks" and the sturdiness with which she stands the "aerial attacks" which are peculiar to our own kind.

*UVM Medical College Year Book
entry for 1929, the year Emelie
graduated*

*Emelie Perkins graduated from
Medical College of the University
of Vermont at the age of 39.*



humor, followed by thought, facts, and common sense, led to great stories and discussions—possibly not only confirming her strong democratic ideals but her Democratic ones, too. She loved a good discussion in which everyone's views were broadened, including her own. She always wanted to *know*. There were also the gatherings of family and good friends bound by love, tradition, laughter and respect. There were travels, alone and together, good books, good food at home or in restaurants where she was always personally welcome.

The November 1934 Smith Alumnae Quarterly reports: "Emelie Perkins spent a month last summer in Montreal, learning how they give anaesthesia at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Hers is a general practice in Rutland, but she is also a consultant in pediatrics and she does gynecological work as well. She writes, 'It is sad at times and discouraging being a doctor, especially now, when the only prescription for some is rest and freedom from worry. And that cannot be had. But along comes a patient—a baby that is gaining half a pound a week, and it is not worried about a thing! Anyway it is a great business!'"

In 1932 Emelie was one of twelve friends—women of Rutland—to form The Nednettihc Club for the purpose of supporting a free bed at the Rutland Hospital. The name of the club was Chittenden spelled backwards, and may have been a reminder of where the idea was initiated. (Several of the members had summer camps on Furnace Brook in Chittenden.) The agreement was made 22 April 1932 at which time \$5000 was turned over to the hospital with the condition that it be invested safely and securely to produce at least \$250 a year which was to be turned over to the Nednettihc Club. These funds were then used to pay for some of the hospital expenses of those in need. Considering the fact that until 1951 the cost of a hospital room was often under \$6.50 a day, the funds went considerably farther than they would today. The club was active until 1962. Emelie was the surviving member.

In February 1937 the Smith Alumnae Quarterly said, "Emelie Perkins has been appointed physician for the State Reformatory for Women in Rutland. In addition, she is continuing private practice." In August of the same year it recorded, "Emelie Perkins bought a farmhouse three miles from Rutland (Vt.) high on a hill, over 100 years old, an acre of ground with apple trees blooming and lilacs budded. The 20' x 21' living room is on an ell with windows in four directions. Tell 1910 to drop in." Her friends and family all "dropped in" over the years for many good times, but the August 1938 Alumnae Quarterly reissued the invitation to 1910 with her caution, "The house is comfortable, but the service is terrible. A cousin suggested I name the farm Ottohavachef." She also noted that she "enjoyed teaching a course on care of children to seniors in the home economics dept. of the Univ. of Vermont."

In November 1941 she was still enjoying her practice as a country doctor, driving 65 miles to Burlington once a week to teach child care and continuing to take medical care of the State's women prisoners. ". . . [Also] taught a course on public health at Middlebury [and] received a certificate from the American Board of Pediatrics after taking examinations, which I disliked as much as I did in college."

It was during these busy years of 1941 and 1942 that Emelie helped establish the Well-Baby Clinics in Rutland and Manchester. In Rutland they were organized under Community Child Care, Inc., whose president was Anna Hurley, and in



Emelie's drawings of her house and hearthside in Mendon



Manchester as part of the Manchester Welfare and Nursing Association, Mary Rogers Warren, president. In each location she examined, prescribed for and counseled many, many children and their parents until her retirement in 1957. Many of her friends at that time had worked together in The Vermont Children's Aid Society: Miss Josephine Webster (the first general secretary), Miss Persis S. Holden (who succeeded her in that position), Mrs. Henry B. Shaw and Miss Sybil A. Pease of Burlington, to name a few. In 1964 when Josephine Webster wrote the history of the Children's Aid Society, *The First Fifteen Years, 1919-1934*, she referred to Dr. Emelie M. Perkins, a former director and for many years guardian of the health of children who were served in the Rutland District.

From 1942 to 1950 there were family losses which were deeply meaningful for her: the death of her mother (Mrs. Clarence O. Perkins) in 1942, of her older sister, Louise, in 1946 and of Louise's husband, Birney Clark Batcheller, in 1950. In 1942 her nephew Franklin had entered the army. After her mother's death Emelie moved her office from the Gryphon Building into her family home at 45 North Main Street. The Raggedy Ann doll, wicker rocker, and picture were joined by a large doll house in the front hallway and the adjoining dining and bath rooms would be Emelie's office space until she retired. The Smith Alumnae Quarterly of February 1946 reported: "Emelie Perkins during the war started to 'feel her age'. With practically all the young doctors in service, 12 to 15-hour days, and night calls thrown in, we think she has reason. She adds, however, that she loves her practice and is thoroughly spoiled by her competent, pretty, thoughtful maid. [In February 1951] 'For me, I'm the same old country M.D. specializing in pediatrics.' [In May 1954] Emelie Perkins M.D. in October drove to Miami to attend meeting of American Acad. of Pediatrics. Stopped in Williamsburg."

Smith College Class of 1910 Forty-Fifth Reunion Yearbook was published in 1955 in its usual cryptic style. Emelie's entry read:

A Pediatrician on staff of Rutland Hosp., Caverly Preventorium and Well Baby Clinic, has a good housekeeper and good sec. . . . Also, currently active in the Elizabeth Lund Home for Unmarried Mothers and the Vermont Tuberculosis Assn. [the first woman head of the organization]; Volunteers for Rutland Hospital and as pediatrician to Well Baby Clinic. . . . Likes drawing, card playing and detective stories, reading quite a bit, mostly non-fiction, political, biography and books by naturalists. Dislikes modern art and music. Pet peeve is Fulton Lewis, Jr. An Independent, voted for Adlai because she likes the Dem. outlook. For U.N., N.A.T.O., and T.A., against Joe. Emelie has grown more liberal, because as a Pub. Health Nurse and then as a physician, she has seen a good deal of poverty and suffering, some of it preventable. Liked Smith [College] because she learned to mix with people and considers none of her four years wasted. Greatest satisfaction has been in acquiring skill and using it in the care of children and in her association with Children's Hosp., Boston, where many children with conditions beyond her ability have been cured. Hopes for the future are the '\$64.00 question.' Plays with the idea of retiring, but loves her work. If, and when, she reaches a point where she is good enough to do book illustrating, it would be easier to give up her practice. Time will tell.

In 1957 Emelie retired from the practice of medicine. The 1956 Annual Report of the Manchester Welfare and Nursing Association reported:

In November of 1956 Doctor Perkins announced her intention of retiring from practice as of January 1, 1957. This news was, indeed, a blow to the clinic staff, the Trustees of the Association, and the many parents whom Dr. Perkins had advised, for a person more dedicated to the program she had initiated would be difficult to find. In the fourteen years Dr. Perkins had conducted these clinics, she had made 196 round trips between Manchester and Rutland, had seen 3,416 children, and had advised more than 325 families. The Town of Manchester owes Dr. Perkins an incalculable debt of gratitude, for the care, advice, and counseling she gave the parents and children of this community. [It] will be passed on for generations in the form of better health and greater knowledge.

In 1960 at the age of 70 Emelie returned to Northampton, Massachusetts, to attend her 50th reunion at Smith. She shared some of her experiences with her classmates at the Class dinner:

When I entered medical school in 1925, our class consisted of 29 boys and me, a 35 year old R.N., determined to be an M.D. and to know everything about medicine. The first hurdle came when I was called upon in class—it was so much easier to say ‘I don’t know’ than to recite. But that didn’t last long. There was such a chorus of prompting all around me, that I was forced to accept what was offered. Of course, it was not all one-sided. When a boy was asked what he would advise a prospective mother to get for a layette, and mumbled, ‘Some kind of a night shirt,’ my experience was helpful. The boys had very definite rules—I had to get my own frog out of the pool for dissection, but, if I lost him, they would chase him for me. In our fourth year, when we were sent out by pairs to work with local doctors, of course the burning question of the day was who was going with me. John, who often helped me out, asked ‘Who is going with you?’ I didn’t know. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I wouldn’t mind going with you myself, if I hadn’t promised Tom. You’ve got a car and you could take me around.’ ‘The car is on its last legs,’ I told him, ‘I’m not sure it will last through Spring term.’ At that, he was serious. ‘Don’t let that get around,’ he urged, ‘That’s your only drawing card.’

When I settled in my home town to practice, I found my colleagues equally helpful. Being the only woman doctor, I stuck out like a sore thumb, but again I found help. The first problem—what to drink at medical banquets—was solved when I was introduced to Ward Eights, a kind of glorified lemonade. The second one was approached directly—‘I think you would have a better practice if you drove a better-looking car.’ Well, I did, and I did.

There were some situations which I found hard to handle. A young woman came to me for diagnosis. That was easy—she was several months pregnant. I said, ‘What about the man—can you marry him?’ She had not seemed upset by the diagnosis, but she was really upset by my question. She said, ‘My God, I don’t know him well enough!’ When the sulfonamides came into use, they seemed an answer to prayer, but I learned they had their limitations. The hospital called me one night to say that a man-patient of mine had just gone into the women’s ward and kissed them all and, at the moment, was chasing a nurse down the cellar stairs—would I come over at once? I called a colleague, the Beau Brummel of the staff, who arrived, his tie under his ear and his hair on end, and order was quickly restored. As more and more immunization procedures were introduced, I found my popularity with my young patients waned and not even lollipops, deplored by dentists, could offset that trend. They would look at me accusingly and say, ‘You stuck a needle into me!’ Which may also have accounted for the comment of one young patient, when her mother asked, ‘Who is that lady coming up the walk?’ ‘That’s not a lady. That’s Dr. Perkins.’

The sulfonamides, in spite of that one unfortunate episode, seemed like a miracle—as when I was called one night to see an old lady with pneumonia,

whose own physician, comfortably established, could afford to turn down night calls. She seemed in a coma when I arrived — did not open her eyes or respond. But when her sister said apologetically, 'We were sorry to call you, but our own doctor does not make night calls,' she roused and said firmly, 'I'm glad he doesn't. He needs his rest.' Sometimes I did, too. On returning from a late call one night, I discovered that, in my sleepy state, I had forgotten to remove my pajama legs, which may have accounted for the amused looks on the faces of the family.

I have spoken of the helpfulness and cooperation among the doctors and nowhere was it better illustrated than in the affair of my cat. My cat had been missing for several days at a time when I was very busy. She turned up at home dragging one leg. I was so busy I got her a bowl of milk and left her. Later I took her to Brandon to the vet — we didn't have one in Rutland then. He said the leg wasn't broken. Her leg continued to drag, so, after a day or so, I called Dr. Ben Cook in the Xray department and asked him how he would feel about taking a picture of a cat. He said he wouldn't mind and took the picture. He decided it was a dislocation. As I was bringing the cat home from the hospital the telephone was ringing. It was Dr. B_____ wanting to know if I would like a consultation on my dislocation case. It seems that Dr. B_____ had wandered into the Xray room and saw the picture. He thought at first it was a picture *in utero* but when he saw the tail he knew it couldn't be. So the next morning — it was a Sunday — I brought the cat down to the hospital in a basket. Dr. B_____ phoned Dr. K_____, an expert anesthetist, and told him to get right over here and give an anesthesia for a dislocation case. At that time young Dr. C_____ was beginning the practice of surgery and he asked if we didn't need an assistant. Well, I thought we did and we all went down to the emergency room. Dr. K_____ put on his great big gloves, unlimbered his huge gas machine, Dr. C_____ hung on to a few legs and tails and I hung on to a few more and we went to work. You know, I just had to laugh to see these men — the cream of their profession — all working so earnestly over my cat. The next day I was working on some papers in the record room and Dr. H_____ [a gynecologist] came in and sat down beside me. He asked: 'Is that cat of yours male or female?' I said, 'Female.' 'Well,' he said, 'I ought to have been in on that case.' That same day there was a new sign in the emergency room: 'No more animals will be operated on in this room.' Later I got a bill from the hospital for the use of the emergency room. It said, 'For self — cat. Charge.' And that was the way of medical practice in the 30s.

At that time, woman's place was in the home — now, I believe, there are more women in college than men, but a newspaper reporter, commenting on the fact that my sister and I both graduated from Smith College (in 1902 and 1910) thought that my father must have been very advanced in his thinking. Even so, if he had lived, I believe that he would have been hurt and offended by my desire to have a job. Women's place was still in the home.



When she retired in 1957, Emelie Perkins resumed her earlier interest in art. She valued greatly the instruction given her by Clement Hurd, a friend and well-known illustrator of children's books. In pursuit of maturing her technique she visited New York City for a month. She briefly studied the technique of etching at the School of Graphic Arts and was a member of the National Arts Club and the Catherine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club until she decided that the climate and country "out west" were more conducive to drawing in winter. She settled on pen and ink drawing and gouache as her medium of choice, and drove a carload of four good friends to California and Oregon, 7 February–16 May. She wrote for the *Smith Alumanae Quarterly*,

"I find I love this life. I must have been born lazy." The trip was planned well and Emelie had the opportunity to draw en route. It was so successful that she and friends went to Taos, New Mexico, in 1959 and to Tucson, Arizona, in several succeeding years. She knew the names of the flowers of the desert and was always accompanied by a bird book and binoculars.

In 1963 *The Tucson Daily Citizen* reported:

After practicing medicine for 25 years, Dr. Emelie Perkins retired and set-out to become an artist. 'There are so many things in the world to do,' she says, 'You just have to get at them.' A native of Vermont, Dr. Perkins comes to Tucson every winter. She does all her work on the spot.

Her Tucson scenes capture the feeling of the heat and dryness of the desert, rather than its brilliance. Her scenes are beautifully, painstakingly drawn. . . . Dr. Perkins' technique is the result of hours of effort and personal discipline rather than years of training. Aside from drawing lessons when she was a child and one year spent at the Art Student's League, she has had no formal art education.

Does she miss her practice? 'I wouldn't for anything have given up my years in medicine,' Dr. Perkins said. 'Yet I love my life now, too. I'm just as happy now which is saying a great deal.'

In 1966, when she was 76, she wrote from Tucson:

Life has been very lively here—I had such a nice time with the Jarvises and, when things let up a little, I want to take Nancy to The Old Adobe for lunch and to see Gerry Peirce's things at The Print Room. Today I picked out an etching for myself—the Peirces are *giving* it! to me to replace the one that I gave to the Smith College Art Gallery. I've drawn quite a bit, but believe me, I've stuck to well traveled roads—Tucson has had another especially horrible murder recently, presumably near the place where I did the picture that your mother has. I went to dinner with the Welfords, who live about thirty miles out in the desert in a nice little development, but they took me to a restaurant on the Benson Highway, because they didn't want me to drive alone on a desert road! After dark, that is—I've read 'Background to Vietnam'—Roy Press—a present from Mrs. Kister. My ignorance was abysmal, but this clears it up a little—very readable and satisfying. [Jean Swain remembers that during the Vietnam War she and Emelie linked arms in a circle at a peace gathering in Main Street Park.]

In 1967 she reported to the Alumnae Quarterly: "Retired from private practice 11 years ago but still do some school clinics. For the past two years I have examined the Head Start children in this area, a very satisfying job because funds are available for the correction of defects. And I have returned to the favorite occupation of my youth, pen and ink drawings. I love retirement."

In 1969 another great loss occurred when her older sister, Henrietta Burditt, died in April and her brother-in-law, Wilbert, in October. Emelie then became the family's matriarch (in years *only*).

After celebrating her 80th birthday, 16 May 1970, Emelie wrote:

I wore a beautiful cream colored orchid corsage from Community Child Care—Jo [Webster] and Marjorie [Rose] put on a beautiful party at The Hearthside. Marjorie Clark and Marjorie Adams came from Burlington—Marjorie Adams

and Janet Franzoni were delighted to discover each other — Marjorie had taught Janet in Burlington. The flowers were beautiful from Alices', Julias' and the Roses' gardens. Julia arranged them. Afterwards Jo and I took the flowers to Alice [Bowker] and Dorothea [Pond]. My house is full of flowers — red roses from the Johnstons, pansies and yellow roses from the Medical Staff, apple blossoms from the Heberts, violets from Mary and Helen Franzoni, and a telegram from the Vermont TB Association. Gordon Smith's card summed it up 'Lady Who Look as Young as You on Birthday — very Fortunate Cookie!'

On May 26th in another letter she wrote: "It is a fine, rainy, blowy day and I can stay out of the garden and do a little catching up — birthday thank yous — write Jane Rosequist to thank her for the clipping she sent — a very interesting one, but frustrating, because her pup had eaten a big hole out of the center of it. My garden is ready for seedlings — I have started a drawing in Shrewsbury — a barn. My first choice there was frustrated — a darling little old red house — The owner shot out of the house when she saw me — said she had come there to be alone, and everyone kept barging in. In the meantime, Blondie [cocker spaniel] did a bit of barging on her own — the lady had left the door open — That finished it, and we moved on . . . "

Generally people were very cooperative when they saw Doctor Emelie drawing. She was regularly offered coffee and refreshment. On one occasion she returned on a second day to finish the drawing of a barn and pasture only to find the cows she had been drawing in the pasture were missing. The farmer noticed her plight, opened the gate, and let the cows out so that she could finish the drawing. Another time, when a group of children lingered to watch every stroke of her pen, she told them, if they would leave, she would give them all ice cream cones when the drawing was finished. When that day came, the Station Restaurant in Pawlet was full of Doctor's guests.

Clement Hurd commented about her work in the *Rutland Herald* (20/8/79), "To me (her drawings) not only have great charm and sensitivity, but are a very personal and true reporting of her immediate environment. . . . it is remarkable to find anyone still developing . . . creative abilities in the eighties and (achieving) such distinction in personal expression, as Dr. Perkins has in this show." (Chaffee Art Gallery).

It was during a trip west in 1971 that Emelie, age 81, stepped from a curb in Georgia and fell. Though her leg and hip gave her great pain, she continued to drive with a non-driving friend and finally reached Tucson. It was there she discovered that, indeed, she had broken her hip in Georgia. In reporting to the *Alumnae Quarterly* she wrote: "Thank you all for your concern and your wonderful letters. A remarkable surgeon and a fine new hip — you can buy the makings in any hardware store — have left me almost as good as ever." She "loved" going to the hospital so ably staffed by Spanish-speaking nurses, with whom she immediately became acquainted. When she left the hospital she walked conscientiously and did exercises until she drove herself home to Vermont three months later. She liked to meet a challenge and succeed on her own.

Her drawings sold well and brought her membership in, and honors from, the National League of American Pen Women. Her work was exhibited, mainly, at the Chaffee Art Gallery (Rutland), the Southern Vermont Art Center (Manchester), the Stratton Arts Festival, the Westcorner Gallery (Grafton), the Grist Mill (Chester), and the Print Room (Tucson, Arizona).

In the meantime life at home changed. She reported to the Alumnae Quarterly, "My life is full of surprises. In September 1972 my pampered way of life ended when my housekeeper of many years died [Josephine Proulx]. At that time I took into my home two teen-age girls with their pets, so our household now consists of me, Trina 17, Janice 14, 2 spoiled dogs, 3 cats. It has been a great experience and an on-going education. The girls are dear, thoughtful, companionable, helpful. This fall I have served with four young women on the personnel committee of our new Women's Health Center."

The Doctor continued her participation on the Personnel Committee for the Southern Vermont Women's Health Center and worked closely with Edwina Austin, Susan Brown, Anne Sarcka, and Evelyn Westebbe. She was also a board member of Retired Senior Volunteer Programs and held a responsible place in the Common Cause telephone network.

In December 1973 Emelie's Christmas card to cousins noted, "This will be my first winter in Vermont for eighteen years—something different, anyway—there is a fine big woodpile in the backyard, and I have Blondie and Samantha [cat] for heating pads, and they don't use any electricity."

Dr. Emelie Munson Perkins was a beloved person who had been doctor to hundreds of children in Rutland. Her visions and goals were framed with people about whom she cared—both physically and mentally. Wonderful stories were told about how "Dr. Perkins stayed up all night feeding my baby with an eyedropper" or how when Tommy was fretful, Dr. Perkins came to the house and urged pabulum into his mouth. This was long before it was generally recognized that babies could handle solid food and eat when they were hungry, not following a schedule. Her life was lived and written by the people of Rutland who knew and loved her and whom she loved and served.



Emelie was the recipient of the following treasured honors bestowed upon her by her community and her alma maters.

◇ In the late 1930s, the girls at the State Reformatory for Women gave her a gold cigarette lighter engraved, "Dr. Perkins from Riverside."

◇ On 12 December 1956, at her retirement, Community Child Care gave her an engraved sterling-silver plate expressing their appreciation.

◇ In December 1974, the *Vermont Sunday News* proclaimed "Mendon Pediatrician Cited as "Grandmother of the Year" and noted that Governor Thomas P. Salmon, on Friday, the thirteenth at the Unitarian Church in Rutland had personally presented Dr. Perkins with the Citation.

◇ In February 1977 Dr. Emelie M. Perkins was awarded The Smith College Medal by her alma mater. The medals are given "to alumnae and friends of the college who best exemplify in their lives and in their service to the community, the true purpose of a liberal arts education." Her citation said in part: "Emelie Munson Perkins, Class of 1910, M.D. 1929, Public health nurse, physician, artist. . . . Your pioneering spirit has always kept you close to the Vermont landscape which you paint and your wish to serve community health keeps you an active public health worker in your 87th year. Your achievement, as the founder of the Manchester well-baby clinic, and

THOMAS P. SALMON
GOVERNOR



STATE OF VERMONT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
MONTPELIER

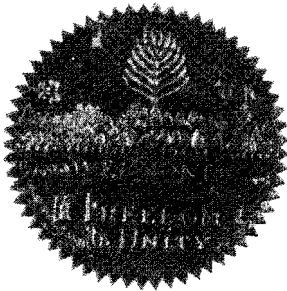
CITATION FOR DR. EMELIE PERKINS

For many, many years you have practiced medicine in the Rutland Area and years ago established the "Well-Baby" Clinic where for 15 years you examined and prescribed for hundreds of children of the clinic families who regarded you as both Doctor and Friend.

You have been active, and still are, in all phases of community activities, and as a member of many boards throughout the State you have given of your experience and time relentlessly.

I know that the great satisfaction you must feel at having done these things is ample reward for you, but, it is altogether fitting that the State of Vermont formally recognize your contributions as a tireless and effective worker for a better way of life for the people of your community and State.

It is, therefore, with a great deal of personal pleasure that I recognize you today as Vermont's Grandmother of the Year and ask all Vermonters to join me in honoring you for your many achievements and for the inspiration you have provided to so many of your fellow citizens.



Given under my hand and the
Great Seal of the State of
Vermont, at Montpelier, this
thirteenth day of December,
A. D. 1974.

Thomas P. Salmon
Governor

as its physician cannot be quantified. Your second calling as an artist, entered into at age 65, has brought equal distinction with that earned in your medical career. The youthful zest displayed in your painting is matched by the adventurousness which has enabled you to take on the role of foster mother to two daughters in your 83rd year.

Other recipients of the Medal at the same ceremony were: Anne R. Conover, Class of 1928, a conservationist; Peggy C. Kelley, Class of 1935, a theatrical scenic and lighting designer; and Jean S. Picker, Class of 1942, United States representative to the United Nations Commission for Social Development.

◇ In November of 1977 the Rutland County Branch of the American Association of University Women awarded her recognition for her Medical Service to the community. Other recipients were: Florence B. Boyce and Thelma A. Noble—Life Memberships, 50 years of service to AAUW; Emily B. Sheldon, social service; and Katherine King Johnson, art and business.

◇ In November 1979, at the time of a University of Vermont Board of Trustees Meeting in Sherburne, Dr. Perkins was one of four Rutland area residents to be honored by the university for their contributions to their communities and to UVM. The honorees were nominated by their neighbors in Rutland County and by the board of trustees. They received a wall plaque and a two-volume set of *The Life of Ira Allen*. Other honorees were: Willard Smith '15, Wayne M. Edson '25, and Edwin E. Bergstrom.

◇ That same year, on the occasion of her 50th Reunion at U.V.M. Medical School, she received the Alumni Association Citation honoring her contribution to school and community. As she was hospitalized at the time and not able to attend the ceremony, the President of the Alumni Association traveled to Rutland from Burlington to present the citation to her at her bedside in the Rutland Hospital. She made a good recovery in succeeding weeks.

◇ On 1 August 1981 Mendon celebrated its 200th anniversary and Dr. Emelie joined Ella Bridge and Chester Boutwell as honored citizens of the town when they were transported by horse and buggy around the parade grounds at Bridge's Field.

After receiving the Smith College Medal, Emelie reported to her 1910 classmates in the Alumnae Quarterly, "Such a wonderful 3 days at Smith! Tuesday our mini-reunion; Editha [Armstrong], Madeline and Bill Wright, Margaret Dieter, Margaret Gilbert Haven and I had lunch together with my niece, Mary Lou Burditt '49 and my cousin Frances Beardsley Hoke '40. We had a fine visit reminiscing and catching-up. Wednesday, Mr. and Mrs. Conway's dinner party where our Pres. [Mrs. Conway, college president] honored 1910 by seating me at her right. Thurs. the beautiful music and ceremony in John M. Greene Hall followed by a friendly reception at Alumnae House where I met old and new friends, including Mr. Mendenhall [former president of Smith], and students, among them our Vermonters. Then a delicious luncheon at the Gym. The next day I left for Tucson, driving out with friends."

Her very dear friends, Marjorie and Dick Rose, Jean Ross and Evelyn Westebbe were among those who attended the Medal ceremonies. Emelie and the Roses left the next day for Tucson where Emelie would spend the winter.

Editha Armstrong, president of the Class of 1910, bubbled over with her report: 'Hooray, Hooray! You all should have been with me today when our dear Emelie was awarded the SMITH MEDAL. As her guest I was right down

front at every event and, to bring you up to date. . . . hadn't seen her for seven years and, truly, she hasn't changed a bit and was her usual serene and lovely self. And how elegant she looked in her long flowing, chiffoney blue dress at our President's House. Don't we 1910ers get around? Many of Emelie's friends had come from far and near and as I looked about I found them all choked up as I was. . . . We are now again at the ceremonies. It is Thursday . . . Emelie was the first one called and she was escorted up the steps to the stage; never a falter, but I wobbled every step of the way for her. She stood so straight while the President read the citation and you never heard so much clapping in your life and it went on and on. Choke up by all concerned. . . . How about going without coffee for a month or two or three and sending in a big gift in honor of our Emelie who leaves for Arizona tomorrow?

In 1976 the *Rutland Herald* reported that a panel, meeting at the Rutland Library and sponsored by Rutland Mental Health, discussed the subject of what it is like being old. Dr. Perkins noted three turning points in life that she marked with the ages 26, 66, and her present age, 86.

'At 26,' [she said] . . . things are certain; there are many paths to choose from and new responsibilities. At 66, one has made the decisions—right or wrong—and there is freedom from responsibility; there are chances for some at that age to read the books that time wouldn't allow before, travel, make new friends and enjoy old ones. At 86 there is the melancholy warmth of enjoying what one has.' But Perkins also pointed out the low points of the 'movement of life': One becomes tired more easily. Also, one is no longer a part of his occupational group. 'We're all gregarious,' she said. 'We all want to be members of groups. To lose that is a great loss.' Still, in Perkins' case at least, the enjoyment of old age seems to have outdone all else. She said that recently she was having lunch in a Rutland restaurant when she noticed a woman was staring at her. As the woman left the restaurant she dropped an envelope on Perkins' table. Inside the envelope there was a message that said, in a nutshell: Pardon my watching, but being a fan of people-watching, I noticed that you 'radiate'; you are the type of person I develop my stories around. Thank you for making my afternoon a happy one. The woman, it turned out, was a freelance writer.

Marjorie and Dick Rose rescued Emelie in 1979, as was evident in the Smith Alumnae Quarterly: "I am off to Florida in March and I won't mind leaving this Vermont winter. We will drive down stopping in Savannah, then spending two weeks on Marco Island." This was to be her last trip. Marjorie and Dick later reminisced about experiences they had had traveling with Emelie, including driving across the country three times. They had visited all the canyons—Grand, Bryce, and Zion—and had stopped in many towns with special attractions—Las Cruces (New Mexico), Austin (Texas), the birthplace of Will Rogers (in Oklahoma), and Tombstone (Arizona) among others. It was not unusual—even far from Rutland—to have people greet Emelie by name. In New Orleans a Smith College friend ran up to say hello while Emelie stood in line at a restaurant. Another time, when her car broke down on the Mexican border near Sasabe, Arizona (population 50), the local postmistress, a Smith Alumna, invited her for tea while a tow truck came from Tucson, a distance of about sixty miles. Emelie had a wonderful time! In Mobile, Alabama, Raphael Pumpelly inquired, "Aren't you Dr. Perkins?" His wife, Amelie Van Doren Ripley, was a granddaughter of William Young Ripley of Rutland, Vermont. After this encounter, Emelie enjoyed reading his two-volume account of *his* travels.

In June 1980 Emelie attended her 70th reunion at Smith College on her 90th birthday. She wrote to the Quarterly, "Our 70th reunion was very nice though we missed our classmates who were not there. The Infirmary staff took fine care of us, we marched at the head of the Parade, and I wore The Dress, which I believe now goes to the Museum."

In later years, despite two successful cataract operations, Emelie found it impossible to draw. She looked forward every Thursday to seeing Betsy Wild, Amorette Berg, Doris Belden, Hope Hubbard and Esther Ward who came regularly to play either canasta or Scrabble and have dessert. At other times she loved accumulating high Scrabble scores against her devoted Jan Marcille and Scott Barrett, who had joined the household, and Tina and Jerry Bourassa who loved her dearly and lived across the street.

In September 1983 Jan and Scott were married at The Mission Farm Church in Sherburne, Vermont, and Emelie, now 93, gave the bride away. She also attended the reception at the Mountain Top Inn and took part in the festivities.

During the next year or two Emelie grew increasingly frail of body and tired easily, but her determination and spunk were truly remarkable. Louise McCoy's invitation for a luncheon to be served on Emelie's own dining table brought smiles, and a sparkle to her eye. With the joy of anticipation, Emelie, quite weak, literally rose to the occasion, conversed with pleasure, and enjoyed herself thoroughly.

In February of 1986 Marjorie and Dick Rose went to Florida. Before leaving, they called upon Emelie (age 95) to say goodbye. "As soon as we get home, we'll all go out to lunch."

"I'll be there," said Emelie, smiling, but two months later Emelie died, just short of her 96th birthday, on 17 March 1986. Surviving her are her niece, Mary Lou Burditt, her nephew, Franklin Burditt, his wife Esther and their family, Gordon, Gwen and Charles.

An editorial appreciation in the *Rutland Herald* 19 March 1986 included the following:

Noted for the services she contributed over the years to the Well Baby Clinics of Rutland and Manchester, the Children's Aid Society and the Crippled Children's Division, throughout her years of practice she concentrated on improving her medical knowledge at every opportunity. Unlike some doctors, she didn't mind admitting there was always more to be learned. . . . Dr. Perkins was a no-nonsense person, true-blue, dedicated, without pretense or false humility. If she reached a point with a patient where she doubted she could be of further help, she said so. Is she tough? She must have been to do all the things she did while maintaining at least an outward mien of total calm and control of her emotions. . . . An inveterate cigarette smoker, she continued smoking long after medical evidence became conclusive about the link between cigarettes and lung cancer. Her persistent smoking in old age was a reminder of the example of a man in his 80s recovering from a bad fall who asked his doctor whether he should give up the habit. 'What difference does it make?' was the doctor's reply.



Emelie Perkins reflected the strong characteristics of her forebears:

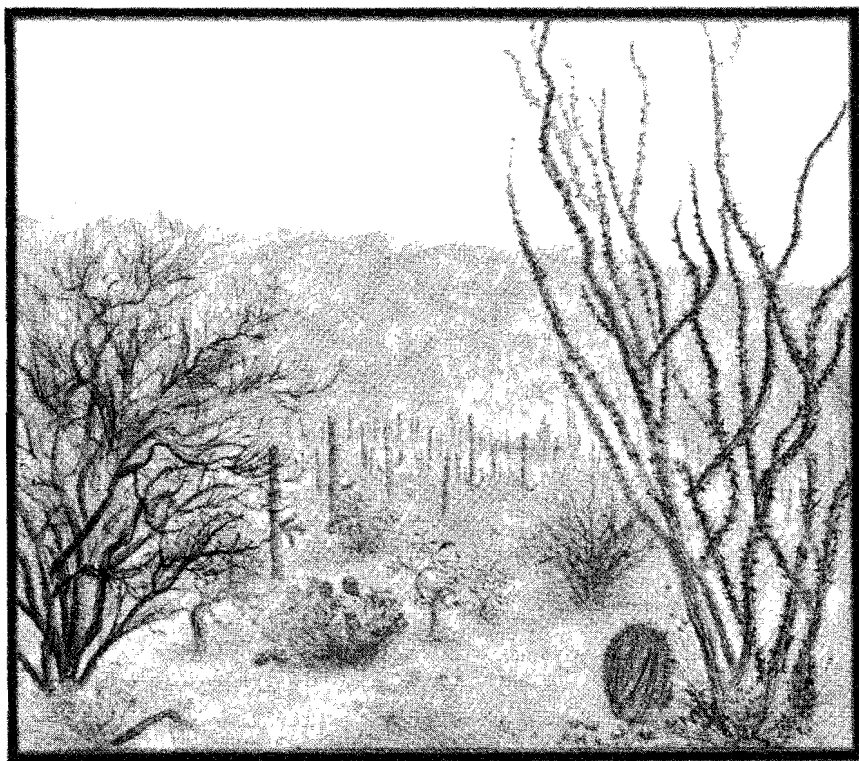
Her father, Clarence, was one of the leading citizens of Rutland. He was ambitious, had drive, organizational ability, and a predilection for hard work.

Her mother, Mary Cornelia, always seemed to be calm, cool, and collected—and loved to write and travel. She graduated from Bradford Academy in 1874. She was the class poet.

Her grandmother, Mary Cornelia (Munson) Childs, was a woman of unusual literary ability, and some artistic taste, according to a family record.

Her grandfather, Henry Olin Perkins, loved children (he had eleven) and, according to the *Rutland Herald*, “. . . had much to do in the construction of the Rutland Railroad, and was for several years assistant treasurer and paymaster of the company, and was superintendent of the building of the roundhouse and passenger depot, and very active in other directions. He was the pioneer in the laying out and improvement of Merchants Row, and built the first buildings on that street, building the blocks on the west side from West Street to the present Opera House, and started the business on the street and was much criticized, and called fool-hardy, as a financial proposition, but time has shown his advanced wisdom and belief in the growth and eventual prosperity of the town. . . . However much opposition he may have met in the days of his activity and financial strength—none can say at his tomb that he has not been a pioneer and promoter of the prosperity of the community—a useful citizen deserving of the respect of all our citizens, however much in his independent ways and manner he may have run counter to the opinions of some of his fellows.”

Emelie read this with laughter but with pride. She truly embodied all of these qualities—and more!



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